

(3)
A
S E R M O N
Occasion'd by the
D E A T H
O F

Mrs. Honor Wood,

Who departed this Life

October the 14th, 1737.

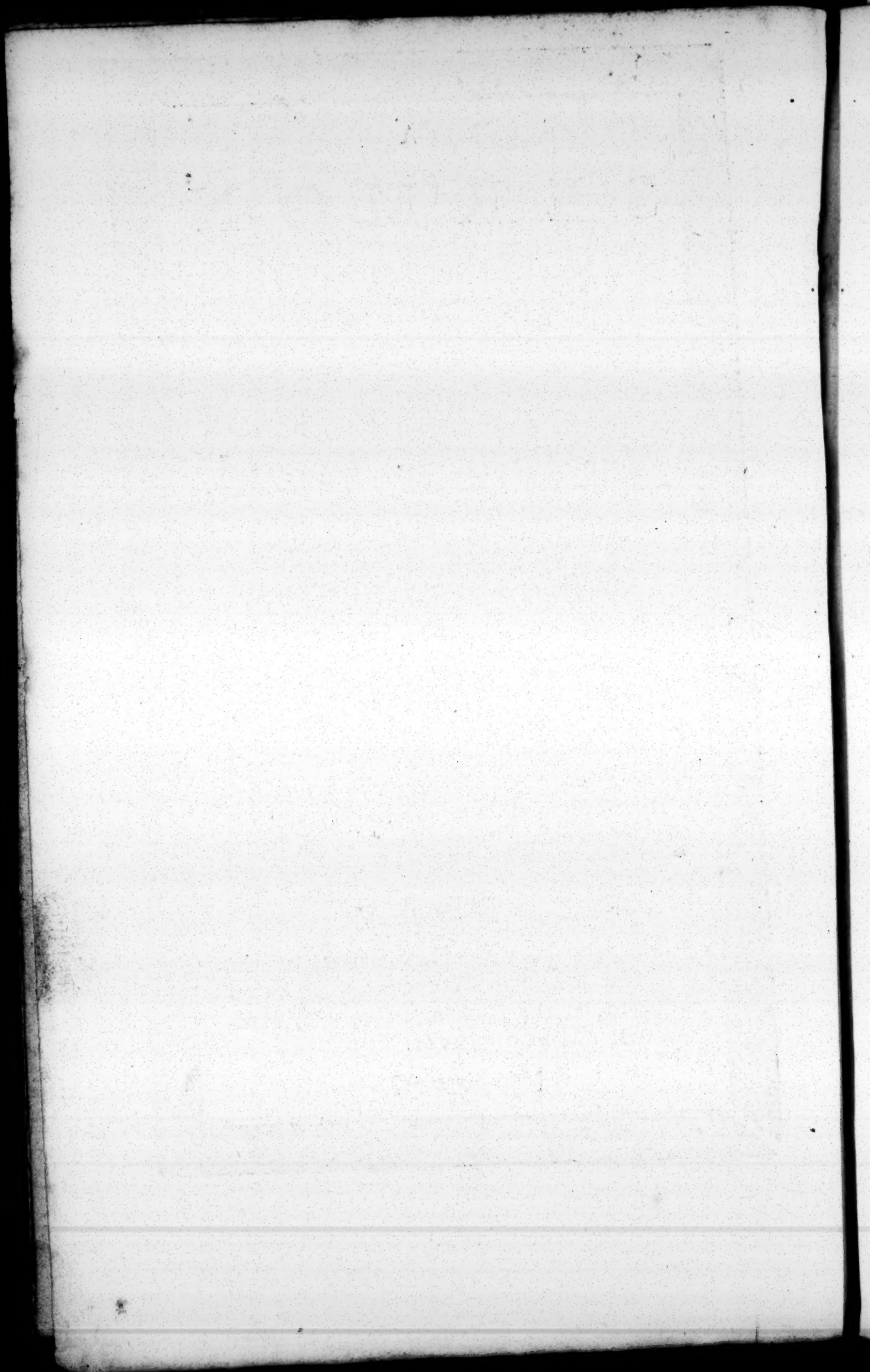
By W. LANGFORD, M. A.

*Printed at the united Requests of the Rev.
Mr. Wood and his CONGREGATION.*

L O N D O N,

Printed for JOSEPH DAVIDSON, at the
Golden-Lion in the *Poultry*; and RICHARD
KING, at the *Bible and Crown* in *Fore-*
street. M DCC. XXXVII.

[Price Sixpence.]



PSALM xxiii. 4.

Yea, though I walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, I will fear no Evil: For thou art with me, thy Rod and thy Staff they comfort me.

THESE were some of the last Words of our *departed Friend*, Mrs. Wood, whose Death was the Occasion of this Discourse.

HAPPY Soul! that could thus stay itself upon God in the nearest Views of Eternity, and maintain such living Hopes in dying Moments: And, happy we! if the Good Spirit, who enabled her to *breathe out her Soul* in these Expressions of Faith, shall be pleased to write them on our Hearts, and communicate to us the Comfort contained in them.

DAVID, the Author of this Psalm, was a Man after God's own Heart; in his sacred Songs we have a Collection of the chief Ex-

B

periences

periences of pious Souls, throughout all Ages of the World. The Powers and Principles of the spiritual Life ; the Struggle between Nature and Grace ; the Successions of Hope and Fear, Joy and Sorrow, which the Saints are well acquainted with, are here set in the strongest and most affecting Light.

THIS Psalm seems to have been composed in some of the Author's brighter Moments, when his Soul was blessed with the *Sun-shine* of God's gracious Countenance. It is a beautiful Representation of God's Goodness to his Servant *David*, under the Notion of a Shepherd's Care of his Flock. The Land of *Judæa* abounded with Shepherds: *David* himself was taken from following the Sheep to be a Ruler of *Israel*; in describing God's Goodness to him, he alludes to the well-known Office of a Shepherd, in the principal Branches of it, which were, to *provide suitable Food and Places of Rest for the Flock, to heal the diseased, to reduce the straying Sheep, and to defend them all in time of Danger.* To the first of these he refers in the 1st and 2d Verses of this Psalm----
The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want; he maketh me to lie down in green Pastures, he leadeth me besides the still Waters. As a good Shepherd takes Care to supply the Wants of his Flock, feeds them in green Pastures, provides convenient Places of Rest for them in the Heat of the Day, and in the Even-
 ing

ing leads them to gentle quiet Streams, that they may satisfy their Thirst without Fear or Danger ; so my good God does and will communicate every needful Benefit to me, for the Support and Comfort of the natural and spiritual Life.

IN the 3d Verse he alludes to two other Parts of the pastoral Care, the healing the diseased, and reducing the stray Sheep. *He restoreth my Soul* (heals my spiritual Diseases, and renews my Strength impaired by Sin) and *leadeth me in Paths of Righteousness*; (when I have been seduced, or am in danger of being led astray) and this he does not for any Merit in me, but *for his Name's sake*; for the Honour of his own free and undeserved Mercy.

IN my Text, which follows, he has an Eye to the other Branch of the Shepherd's Business, which was to defend the Flock in time of Danger: As for instance, if they went in the Evening through a dark Valley, where they were liable to be assaulted by Wolves and other Beasts of Prey, the Shepherd was present with his Rod and Staff, not only to guide, but to protect them, and beat off their devouring Enemies. In allusion to this, the Psalmist says, *Yea, though I walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, I will fear no Evil: For thou art with me, thy Rod and thy Staff they comfort me.*

periences of pious Souls, throughout all Ages of the World. The Powers and Principles of the spiritual Life ; the Struggle between Nature and Grace ; the Successions of Hope and Fear, Joy and Sorrow, which the Saints are well acquainted with, are here set in the strongest and most affecting Light.

THIS Psalm seems to have been composed in some of the Author's brighter Moments, when his Soul was blessed with the *Sun-shine* of God's gracious Countenance. It is a beautiful Representation of God's Goodness to his Servant *David*, under the Notion of a Shepherd's Care of his Flock. The Land of *Judæa* abounded with Shepherds: *David* himself was taken from following the Sheep to be a Ruler of *Israel*; in describing God's Goodness to him, he alludes to the well-known Office of a Shepherd, in the principal Branches of it, which were, to *provide suitable Food and Places of Rest for the Flock, to heal the diseased, to reduce the straying Sheep, and to defend them all in time of Danger.* To the first of these he refers in the 1st and 2d Verses of this Psalm----
The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want ; he maketh me to lie down in green Pastures, he leadeth me besides the still Waters. As a good Shepherd takes Care to supply the Wants of his Flock, feeds them in green Pastures, provides convenient Places of Rest for them in the Heat of the Day, and in the Evening

ing leads them to gentle quiet Streams, that they may satisfy their Thirst without Fear or Danger ; so my good God does and will communicate every needful Benefit to me, for the Support and Comfort of the natural and spiritual Life.

IN the 3d Verse he alludes to two other Parts of the pastoral Care, the healing the diseased, and reducing the stray Sheep. *He restoreth my Soul* (heals my spiritual Diseases, and renews my Strength impaired by Sin) and *leadeth me in Paths of Righteousness*; (when I have been seduced, or am in danger of being led astray) and this he does not for any Merit in me, but *for his Name's sake*; for the Honour of his own free and undeserved Mercy.

IN my Text, which follows, he has an Eye to the other Branch of the Shepherd's Business, which was to defend the Flock in time of Danger: As for instance, if they went in the Evening through a dark Valley, where they were liable to be assaulted by Wolves and other Beasts of Prey, the Shepherd was present with his Rod and Staff, not only to guide, but to protect them, and beat off their devouring Enemies. In allusion to this, the Psalmist says, *Yea, though I walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, I will fear no Evil: For thou art with me, thy Rod and thy Staff they comfort me.*

THE Shadow of Death is an Expression sometimes made use of in Scripture to signify any affrighting Object or distressing Circumstance whatsoever: Thus in the Book of *Job*, the Fears of wicked Men are expressed by their being in the *Terrors of the Shadow of Death* *. And when the Psalmist speaks of an afflicted State; *Thou hast sore broken us* (says he) *in the Place of Dragons, thou hast covered us with the Shadow of Death* †; and those that were *bound in Affliction and Iron, he calls such as sit in Darkness, and in the Shadow of Death* ‡. But I apprehend the Valley of the Shadow of Death, in my Text, is a figurative Description of Death itself, which is compared to a Valley covered with Darkness and Horror, because 'tis a most awful Event, and there is a natural Reluctancy and Aversion to it implanted in all Mankind.

I SEE no Reason to suppose that *David* was in a State of imminent Danger, much less that he had the Sentence of Death in himself, when he composed this Psalm; for he concludes it with these Words, Verse 6. *Surely Goodness and Mercy shall follow me all the Days of my Life*. But he speaks in my Text, as one that was just leaving this World, and entering into a better, that we might see how familiar the Thoughts of

* Job xxiv. 17.

† Psal. xlv. 19.

‡ Psal. cvii. 10.

Death were to his Mind, and how strongly he was supported by Faith and Hope in God : *Yea, though I walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, I will fear no Evil: For thou art with me: thy Rod and thy Staff they comfort me,* q. d. I know that I am a dying Creature, and that Death is very awful; but I will not indulge to any dismaying Apprehensions of it, because I am persuaded, O my gracious God, that thou who art now with me by the special Conduct of thy Providence and Spirit, wilt not leave me in a dying Hour, but wilt guide and defend me (as a good Shepherd does his Flock) in my Passage through the dark Valley that divides Earth from Heaven.

THE Text, thus explained, directs us to the following Observations, which I shall speak to in their Order, and then apply the Discourse with a special Regard to the present Occasion.

- I. THAT Death is terrible to Mankind.
- II. THAT God is graciously present with his People in Death; and this is their Defence against the Fear of Evil, and a Spring of living Joy in their last Moments.
- III. THAT good Men may attain to an Assurance of God's special Favour and gracious Presence with them, living and dying.

I. DEATH

I. DEATH is terrible to Mankind; a dark Valley, an affrighting Shadow, an Appearance very formidable.---Death is awful in every view; if we look to it as the Fruit of Sin, as the Destroyer of the human Body, as that which banishes us from the Company, Business, and all the Entertainments of this World, that which separates the nearest Relations, and transmits the Soul into an invisible World and everlasting State: In all these respects it is an awful Event.

It is the bitter Fruit of Sin. Had not Man sinned, he had never died, he had not gone to Heaven through so dark and dismal a Valley. Death is the just Punishment as well as the natural Effect of *Adam's* first Transgression; the Penalty annexed to the original Law was, *In the Day thou eatest of the forbidden Fruit, thou shalt surely die.* Upon *Adam's* Disobedience, this Threatning became a Sentence, and was passed by the great Governour of the World on *Adam* and all his natural Posterity. *Dust thou art, and unto Dust thou shalt return:* For *Adam* stood and fell as a *publick* Person, the Parent, Head and federal Representative of all Mankind, and the Guilt of his Offence was by Imputation transferred to the whole human Race: *In Adam all die* *. *By one Man*

* 1 Cor. xv. 22.

Sin entered into the World, and Death by Sin; and so Death hath passed on all Men, for that all have sinned.*

'TIS the righteous Appointment of God, that Death should spread as far as Sin spreads; and that every House infected with this *Leprosy*, should sooner or later be pulled down---And so the Sentence pronounced on the first human Transgressor, has taken place and been executed upon all Mankind without Distinction (two Persons only excepted, who were translated to Heaven without tasting Death, as Evidences of a future State of Blessedness.) On all others the original Sentence of Death has been and continues to be executed, without respect of Persons.

THERE is indeed a great Difference between the Death of the Righteous and the Wicked; to the Righteous, Death comes without a Sting, though not without a Stroke; Grace makes it a Blessing to them, our great Redeemer brings Good to his People out of this Evil, and makes it, even when it kills one Part of them, to become the Cure of the other and better Part, the End of all Sin, Temptation and Sorrow, and the Passage into a World of eternal Perfection, Light and Blessedness: Thanks be to God, who giveth us the Victory through Jesus Christ our Lord. But still Death is a natural

* Rom. v. 12.

Evil, the just Desert of Sin, and a standing Mark of God's Displeasure against it---- When any of our Fellow-creatures die, we may truly say, See what Sin hath done! And this is a Consideration that renders Death awful. Death is likewise formidable as the Destroyer of the Body, for which the Soul, in the present State of Union, cannot but feel a sensible Tenderneſs. Death diſſolves that curious Frame that was fearfully and wonderfully made in ſecret Places, and not leſs wonderfully preſerved and ſupported by the Providence of God from the Womb: Death in a Moment breaks the fine Machine in Pieces, ſtops all its Motions, deprives it of its Beauty and Activity, drives out the Spirit that inhabited it, and turns it into a cold, lothſome, uſeleſs, Thing that muſt be hid in the Earth from the Sight of the Living, and become a Prey to Corruption and Worms.

DEATH is farther awful, as it takes Men off from the Stage of this World, obliges them to retire for ever from all its Buſineſs and Entertainments, for which the beſt have but too fond a Paſſion. Good *Hezekiah* ſeems to have felt ſomewhat of this, when he ſaid, in the cutting off of his Days, *I ſhall behold Man no more, with the Inhabitants of this World* *. And (which is another deplor-

* *Iſaiah xxxviii. 11.*

able Circumstance) Death separates the nearest Relations and the dearest Friends upon Earth; those that are Partners in Flesh and Blood; those that have lived together in the strictest Bonds, and most pleasing Endearments of civil and sacred Society; those that joined Hands and Hearts in the Affairs of Religion and common Life; that have often prayed and conversed upon the best Subjects, that have taken sweet Counsel together, and gone to the House of the Lord in Company.

Heman bewails this sad Effect of Mortality; *Lover and Friend hast thou put far from me, and mine Acquaintance into Darkness* *.

DEATH is yet more awful, if we consider it as the Passage to an invisible World, a World which we never saw, and whereof our best Conceptions, in this Life, are very obscure and imperfect: But that which makes Death most awful is, that it introduces Men into an everlasting State; 'tis the Gate of Eternity, the dark Entry through which Souls pass into an unchangeable Condition of Happiness or Misery. The rich Glutton and poor *Lazarus* went immediately after their Separation from the Body, the one into a Place of everlasting Torment, the other into a Region of eternal Comfort and Joy †. Death

* Psalm lxxxviii. 18.

† Luke xvi. 22, &c.

finishes our State of Trial, and lands us in a blessed or miserable Eternity. Awful Thought ! How would it affect the Minds of wicked Men, if they would give themselves leave to indulge it, and did not take so much Pains to stifle the Convictions of Conscience, and to banish serious Reflexion ? I am going to an eternal State of Existence, know not how soon I must enter upon it, and yet have made no Preparation for Happiness in it ; O, how awakening must such a Consideration be, when it is duly attended to ! And I may observe here, that good Men themselves are sometimes not a little dismayed in the Prospect of Death, as an Introduction to Eternity ; for they may have great Doubts with respect to their Acceptance with God ; Guilt may lie upon their Consciences, not sufficiently repented of ; they may contract too fond a Passion for the Things of this World, which will make them unwilling and afraid to leave it ; they may grow too remiss and careless in the Duties of secret and social Religion ; fall in too much with the Manners of a defiling World ; and so provoke God to hide his Face from them, and to give Satan a Permission at the same Time to overcloud and distress their Spirits with gloomy Apprehensions of Death, and a future State. Let this suffice for the first Head.

WE go on to observe,

II. THAT

II. THAT God is with his People in Death itself, and that his gracious Presence is a Defence against the Fear of Evil, and a Spring of living Joy to them in their last Moments. I will not fear (says the Psalmist) *Though I walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, for thou art with me, thy Rod and thy Staff they comfort me.*

GOD is present with all Men at all times by his universal Providence, which numbers the very Hairs of our Heads, and encircles us every Moment: They that shut God out of their Thoughts, are not far from him; for in him they live, and move, and have their Being. Whither can we go from his Presence, or flee from his Spirit? But God is with them that fear him by his special Favour, and that both living and dying. When God is said to be with a Man, the Expression usually imports his peculiar Affection and Love to that Man; thus he spake to *Jacob, Return unto the Land of thy Fathers, and I will be with thee**; i. e. I will deal well with thee: for so *Jacob* himself understood the Promise, as appears from his Repetition of it in the following Chapter †.

GOD hath a People in the World, whom he hath chosen and caused to approach to

* Gen. xxxi. 3.

† Gen. xxxii. 9.

himself by unfeigned Faith, Repentance and Holiness: And he is with them as he is not with others; *They are all in his Hands, and near to his Heart; his Eyes are upon them for Good, and his Ear open to their Cry; they abide under the Shadow of the Most High, and dwell in the secret Place of the Almighty.* And he (infinite Condescension!) dwells in them by his Spirit, and has by a gracious Covenant, in and through a Mediator, bound himself to be their God for ever and ever, and to take and treat them as his People in this Life, and that which is to come. He hath said, *I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee* *. *Fear not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the Right-Hand of my Righteousness* †. *When thou passest through the Waters, I will be with thee, and the Rivers shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the Fire, thou shalt not be burnt, neither shall the Flame kindle upon thee* ‡. And to sum up all in a Word, *He hath made an everlasting Covenant with them, that he will not turn away from them to do them Good; but will put his Fear into their Hearts, that they shall not depart from him* ||. According to these Promises, God is with his upright Servants in all Conditions of Life, in Health

* Heb. xiii. 5. † Isaiah xli. 10. ‡ Chap. xliii. 2.
 || Jer. xxxii. 40.

and Sickness, Prosperity and Adversity, and in the Hour of Death too: Then they stand in special need of the Supports of his Grace; and he, who hath guided them with his Counsel until Death, will not be far from them in that decisive Moment. He orders the Time, Place and Manner of their Death; and though these Circumstances may to us be dark and inexplicable, they are all contrived by infinite Wisdom and Goodness. Every good Man may reflect on this with Pleasure, and say with *David*, *Thou art my God, my Times are in thy Hands**.

GOD is with his People in their last Moments, to communicate fresh Pardons in whatsoever they have offended, and stand in need of repeated Acts of forgiving Mercy, through a Mediator.

HE is with them to strengthen their Faith and Patience, and to give them the Victory over Satan, who sometimes is permitted to make the fiercest Attack on the Righteous, when they are come to the very Threshold of Glory.

HE is with them to perfect a begun Work of Sanctification, and to prepare their departing Spirits for the Employment and Joys of that high and holy Place into which no unclean Thing can enter.

HE has been with many of his Saints, by communicating of great Joy in a dying Hour.

* Psalm xxxi. 14, 15.

Witness the Martyrs who have met Death in its most frightful Forms with smiling Countenances, and all the Marks not only of Fortitude, but of Exultation and Pleasure; and witness the Triumphs of many other pious Souls, who have gone out of our World, rejoicing in the Love of God, declaring they have had as much sacred Delight as the earthen Vessel could hold, and that they must go to Heaven in order to know more of its spiritual Pleasures. 'Tis true, God does not deal thus with all his Children. *He is a free Benefactor.* But he is nigh to them all in the Close of Life, to convey necessary Support, and to conduct their dislodged Spirits, under a Guard of Angels, to his heavenly Kingdom.

O, WHAT a Blessing is it thus to enjoy the gracious Presence of God in Life, and at the End of it? This removes all the Causes of Fear, and (so far as it is vouchsafed to, and apprehended by, the dying Christian) takes away the Sense of tormenting Dread; for what can he be afraid of, that knows he has a God nigh to him, and ready to help him, a God of infinite Wisdom, Power and Goodness, his own Covenant-God, who ever lives to fulfil his Promises, and has promised to make all Things, Life and Death itself, to work together for Good to them that love him?

I PROCEED now to the third and last Observation, *viz.*

III. THAT good Men may attain to an Assurance of their Interest in God's Favour, both living and dying; or, that they may, on solid Grounds, be persuaded that God will guide them, not only through Life, but through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, and bring them safe to his blissful Presence above.

'TIS manifest, the Psalmist had this Assurance: In my Text he speaks like one that was as *thoroughly assured* of God's gracious Presence in Death, as he was that he *should* die. And, I hope, we shall see that this was not a Privilege peculiar to him, but what all good Men should endeavour to obtain, and may, without Presumption, expect in the way of their Duty.

THE *Papists* say, that no Man (without a special Revelation from Above) can certainly know that he is in a State of Acceptance with God.

AND it is the Doctrine of some Protestants, that supposing a Man never so well persuaded of his present Acceptance with God, he cannot certainly conclude that he shall abide in that happy Condition to the End of Life, and be finally saved.

IN opposition to both these Sentiments, we humbly conceive, that a sincere Christian
may

may be assured of his Interest in God's Favour through Christ, even unto Life everlasting.

WE confess that Hypocrites may falsely pretend to this Assurance, and that many upright Christians may want it, may walk in Darkness and see no Light.

WE don't imagine that any one can truly Claim this Privilege in a Course of Negligence and Iniquity; nor do we think that every one who is favoured with it does, at all times, keep the full Possession of it, so as to be absolutely free from jealous Thoughts and Apprehensions with reference to his spiritual State.

BUT what we believe is, that a full Assurance of God's special Love, and of final Perseverance therein, may be attained by real Christians: And though after it is attained, 'tis liable to be assaulted by contrary Doubts and Fears; yet the Principle thereof may abide in the Heart, and so far prevail as to keep the Mind habitually (though not always) serene and joyful in the Hope of the Glory of God.

MANY Reasons concur to prove, that a good Man may be assured of his present Acceptance with God through Christ.

THE Gospel proposes very clear and descriptive Marks of those who are interested in its saving Mercies. *Faith, Repentance, and sincere Obedience*, are the distinguishing Cha-

Characteristicks of the real Christian; and these are plainly represented in their *Beginning, Growth* and Progress unto Perfection; surely then we may know by close and serious Reflexions on our Tempers and Lives; whether these Characters belong to us or not; for, though 'tis not so easy a Thing as some may imagine, to know our own deceitful Hearts, yet we may attain to such a Measure of Self-Acquaintance, as is necessary to our making a right Judgment of our State, with reference to the Favour of God, or else our self-reflecting Power is given us to very little Purpose. Am I a Christian, a Child of God? This is the greatest Question we can offer to ourselves. If this cannot be resolved, all other Queries relating to ourselves are very mean, and unworthy of reasonable, immortal Beings; if this Matter cannot be decided, how vain and insignificant a Name is that of Conscience? Who can pretend to have a good Conscience towards God? What are all our Hopes, but Presumptions, or at best mere Conjectures?

THESE Consequences are too absurd to be admitted by any wise and considering Mind.

BESIDES, does not the Apostle *Paul* offer this Exhortation to Christians in general? *Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the Faith; prove your own selves: Know ye not your own selves, how that Christ is in you,*

D

except

*except ye be Reprobates** ? He evidently supposes here, that it would be a great Fault if any of them did not know themselves, whether they were sincere Christians or not. And in another Place he says, *Let every Man prove his own Work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself, and not in another* †. With this agrees St. Peter's Exhortation to Christians, that they should *give all Diligence, to make their Calling and Election sure* ‡. How vain and fruitless must these Counsels be, if the faithful Disciples of Jesus could not certainly know that they are his Disciples?

To conclude this Part of the Argument, the Spirit himself does (I verily believe) bear witness with the Spirits of some Christians in every Age, that they are the Sons of God. This he does by carrying on the Work of Sanctification sensibly in their Minds, and enabling them to discern the blessed Effects thereof; and sometimes by shedding abroad the Love of God in their Hearts, in such an abundant Measure, that they rejoice with Joy unspeakable, and full of Glory.

It appears therefore, that a sincere Christian may attain to a satisfying and well-grounded Persuasion of his Acceptance with God.

* 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

† Gal. vi. 4.

‡ 2 Pet. i. 10.

AND if a Man may certainly know that he is in a State of Favour with God, he may, with equal Certainty, know, that he shall (through Grace) abide in this State to the End, and be finally saved; for his Perseverance and Salvation are ascertained by the Promise of God's immutable Covenant in Christ our Saviour. God hath said (as was before observed) that he will never leave his People, nor forsake them. *The Mountains shall depart, and the Hills be removed, but my Kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the Covenant of my Peace be removed, saith the Lord, that hath Mercy upon thee* *.

AND we know him that hath said, *I give to my Sheep eternal Life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my Hand* †; and St. Paul declares, that *Whom God justifies, them he will also glorify* ‡.

THE Perseverance of the Saints might be proved from the Death, Resurrection, and Intercession of Christ, and from their vital Union to him. But passing these Things, which would lead me beyond the Bounds of a single Discourse, I shall content myself with an Argument drawn from the abiding, immortal Nature of the spiritual Life, which is strongly asserted in those Words of St. John, *Whosoever is born of God, doth not com-*

* Isaiah liv. 10.

† John x. 28.

‡ Rom. viii. 30.

mit Sin, (i. e. is not a Servant of Sin) for his Seed remaineth in him; neither can he sin, because he is born of God*; i. e. every one who is regenerated by the Spirit of God, has an immortal Principle of Grace in him, a Principle that will abide in his Soul to the End of Life, and be an effectual Preservative from total and final Apostacy.

'TIS a farther Confirmation of the Truth we are now defending, that good Men, whose Lives are recorded in the Scriptures, have expressed an Assurance of their Acceptance with God, and their Perseverance therein to the End.

David expresses no less in my Text and other Places; particularly when he says, *As for me, I will behold thy Face in Righteousness; I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy Likeness* †. *Asaph* could say, *Thou shalt guide me with thy Counsel, and afterwards receive me to Glory* ‡; *Whom have I in Heaven but thee, O Lord? and there is none upon Earth that I desire but thee, &c.*

St. Paul breaks forth into these triumphant Expressions, *I am persuaded, that neither Death, nor Life, nor Angels, nor Principalities, nor Powers, nor Things present, nor Things to come, nor Height, nor Depth, nor any other Creature, shall be able to separate us from the Love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord* ||.

* 1 John iii. 9.
lxxiii. 24.

† Psal. xvii. 15.
|| Rom. viii. 38, 39.

‡ Psal.

And

And elsewhere, in the Name of all Christians, *We know* (says he) *that if this earthly House of our Tabernacle were dissolved, we have a Building of God, an House not made with Hands, eternal in the Heavens; therefore we are always confident, knowing that whilst we are at home in the Body, we are absent from the Lord: We are confident (I say) and willing rather to be absent from the Body, and to be present with the Lord* *.

IF the primitive Christians had this Assurance, why may not we obtain it? We are as much concerned as they were, to examine ourselves; we have the same Gospel, Covenant and Promises; the same Mediator and Advocate, the same Spirit (not indeed in his miraculous Gifts, which are not needful for us) but in his sanctifying Influences. 'Tis as great a Truth this Day as ever it was, that except a Man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God; and that, if any Man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his: And if we have the Spirit of Christ, his gracious Operations will produce Effects as real, and sometimes as sensible to the Person that experiences them, as any Thing that relates to the Body and natural Life can be.

I SHALL only observe, for the preventing Mistakes and Abuses of this Doctrine, that

* 2 Cor. v. 1, 6, 8.

God in all his Works of Nature and Grace connects *Means* and *Ends* together. If he determine to preserve any Man in his Favour unto Life everlasting, he will do it by means suitable to that End, that is, in a way of Humility, Prayer, Watchfulness and diligent Obedience; and this may account for the solemn Warnings and Exhortations address'd even to good Men in Scripture, and sufficiently confutes the foolish pretence of those who say, If we are the Children of God, he will preserve us, whether we take care of our own Souls or not. Vain and impious Imagination! for though God keeps his People by his Almighty Power unto Salvation; yet 'tis through Faith and other Graces, which lead to it.

HAVING thus discours'd on the doctrinal Observations, I proceed to the

APPLICATION.

I. LET the foregoing Account of the Awfulness of Death excite careless, unthinking Sinners to prepare for it, by seeking an Interest in the favour of God through Christ. We all know that we must die; Death is appointed to all Men by the irreversible Sentence of the Most High, contained in Scripture, and confirm'd by daily Experience, and Observation. We are plac'd in a dying World, and all Things round about
us

us are mutable and perishing; we ourselves flee away like Shadows, and continue not; in our best Estate here below we are altogether Vanity. Death is *written* upon all our *Creature-Comforts*, and *inwrought* in our Natures; our whole Life what is it but an uninterrupted Motion towards the Grave? And, as Christians, we profess to believe that Death is the Door of Entrance into an Eternal State of Happiness or Woe; and yet how many live thoughtless of their latter End, and its awful Consequences? How many forget *Eternity* in the eager chase of *temporal Objects*? In the Morning of Youth, Pleasure allures the Heart, and Death seems to be at a great distance; in riper Years, Business, Riches, Honours, and the numerous Cares of this Life, engage the Mind, and take Men off from the pursuit of future Blessedness: And if Conscience be awake at any time, and the Sinner finds himself under a necessity of admitting serious Thoughts about a future Life, how prone is he to fall asleep again? to put off the great concern of Preparation for Death to an uncertain Hereafter, or to satisfy his Mind with a few vain Sighs and ineffectual Wishes, which never issue in a real Conversion to the Love and Service of God, through a Mediator?

THUS Life runs on with too many, and comes to its final Period before they have begun the most important Business of it,
which

which is to obtain the Favour of God, and a Title to the Felicity of another World.

BUT, Sinner, I beseech thee make a solemn Pause this Day -- Think how short and uncertain Life is ; how awful a thing it is to die ; to change Worlds, and go from hence into an immutable, everlasting State of Joy or Grief ; and what a wretched Creature thou must be, if Death should come upon thee as a Thief in the Night, and find thee sleeping in Sin, unprepar'd for thy Appearance before God in the invisible World. O dreadful Change ! to be surpriz'd into eternal Misery ; who can express the Terror of such a Case ? And yet ('tis to be fear'd) the Case is too common. As in the Days that were before the *Flood*, they were eating and drinking, marrying, and giving in Marriage, until the Day that *Noah* entered into the Ark, and knew not, till the Flood came and took them all away ; so Death comes unexpected, and carries off many careless Souls in every Age and Part of the World.

THE Lord give us Wisdom to number our Days, and consider our latter End ; and if any of us have been hitherto negligent of our everlasting Interest, may we be convinced of our Sin and Danger, and led to an Acceptance of the Gospel-Offer of Forgiveness and eternal Life, through the all-sufficient Mediation of Christ : May we fly without delay to the Mercy of God in a Redeemer,
before

before it be too late, before our Feet stumble on the dark Mountains, and in the Valley of the Shadow of Death.

2. LET me, from what has been said, exhort sincere Christians to get and keep clear and strong Evidences of their Interest in God's Favour, that they may be rais'd above the enslaving Fears of Death.

GOD has promis'd to be with his upright Servants in Life and Death too, and there is a solid Foundation laid in his everlasting Covenant of Grace for their most assured Hope of his Friendship, both in this World and that which is to come; but many do not know the Things that are freely given them of God, and therefore they live too much in a servile dread of Death; and some of them go out of the World (to all Appearance) under a Cloud. God permits this (very often we may safely say) to correct some Fault of theirs, and to warn others against it: And the common Fault is, the want of due Care in settling the Evidences of Acceptance with God.

EVERY Saint would be willing to leave this World whenever God calls him, if he were assured of his Interest in the divine Favour; for a Heaven-born Soul naturally soars upward, and tends to its own World of eternal Light, Perfection and Happiness. 'Tis true, a melancholy Habit of Body, and the Suggestions of Satan, may have a great Influence

ence to eclipse the Joy and Hope of sincere Souls; but if they are not duly concerned to clear their Title to Heaven, and to preserve it in full Evidence (which is too often the Case) no wonder that they are left to gloomy Apprehensions, which disquiet their Minds, abate their Love to God and zealous Activity in his Service. 'Tis therefore of the last Importance to us (Christians) that we build our Hopes of God's Favour on a sure and strong Foundation; and to this End, let us often examine ourselves by the Scripture Account of Faith, Repentance, and sincere Obedience: Let us beg the Illumination and inward Testimony of the Spirit, and not be contented till we can on good Grounds say, The Lord is our God for Ever and Ever, and he will be our Guide even unto Death: And when we can say this, let us be careful to keep our selves in the Love of God; let us watch and pray that we enter not into Temptation; let us purify our selves from all Filthiness of the Flesh and Spirit, and perfect Holiness in the fear of God; let us walk humbly with him in the Ways of Piety and universal Righteousness; live by Faith in Christ for Pardon, Acceptance and Assistance in every good Work; and earnestly pray to God to search us and try us, to see if there be any evil Way in us, and lead us in the way everlasting. In such a Course as this, we may hope to obtain a comfortable

able Persuasion of the Divine Favour, and a joyful Prospect of the heavenly Inheritance: For the Effect of Righteousness is Peace and Quietness and Assurance for ever.

3. WHAT a Comfort is it, upon the loss of near Relatives, if we have Reason to think that God was with them living and dying?

THIS was the Happiness of our departed Friend, Mrs. *Wood*, whose Death occasion'd this Discourse.

I had but a short Acquaintance with her; but what I have observ'd my self, and what has been communicated to me by most credible Testimony, I think it my Duty to take some notice of upon this Occasion, for the Honour of the Grace of God, and as a Motive and Encouragement to your Duty.

I might begin with some honourable mention of her earthly Descent, to which Religion added the most illustrious Nobility; She was well born * into our World, and (which was a much greater Dignity and Blessing) born from above.

SHE remembered her Creator in the Days of her Youth, and consecrated the first Fruits

* Her Father was Dr. WILLIAM DAWES, President of the Royal College of Physicians. Her Uncle, Sir EDWARD LITTLETON, Governor of the Bay of *Bengal*. Her Grandfather, Dr. JOHN LITTLETON, Master of the Temple, whose Brother was Lord LITTLETON, Keeper of the Great Seal of *England*. Her Mother was a Gentlewoman of eminent Piety, adorn'd her Profession in Life and at Death. Some of her last Words were, *Into thy Hands I commit my Spirit, for thou hast redeemed me, Lord God of Truth.*

of her Time to him. She walked closely and humbly with her God, through various Scenes of Service and Trial, and was faithful unto Death. She was a very strict and conscientious Observer of Closet-Religion; and the good Effects of her secret Communion with God were seen in her Life; particularly in her Behaviour in the Family, she was a very bright and lovely Example of all the domestick Virtues.

HER Piety, Prudence, and the uncommon Sweetness of her Temper, made her a great Blessing in the Relations of a Wife and Parent, and a Help truly meet for a Minister of the Gospel. Her Heart was greatly enflamed with Love to the publick Ordinances of God's Worship; a Day in his Courts she preferred to a thousand other Days; and as she had often met with God in this present worshipping Society, her Mind was with you, when Providence restrained her from the desired Privilege of local Communion with you.

IN short, she was an upright Christian, and very exemplary in her Conversation, And in a special Manner, the amiable Virtues of Humility, Meekness and Benevolence, (which were deeply inscribed upon her Soul) shone and made a beautiful Appearance in her Practice. She met with many Trials of Faith and Patience, was habitually resigned to the Will of God, and
intent

intent upon the right Improvement of Afflictions.

IN her last Illness, her Mind was overclouded for a while; but in the Evening-tide it was light. She took her leave of her loving and beloved Consort, and her dear Children, with great Composure of Spirit, Piety and Affection. And for herself, she in her last Moments joyfully repeated the Words of my Text, as a Representation of her Case; *Yea, though I walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, I will fear no Evil: For thou art with me, thy Rod and thy Staff they comfort me; and the Expressions of holy Job, Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him; and, finally, the triumphant Declaration of St. Paul, I know in whom I have believed, and that he is able to keep the good Thing which I have committed to him against that Day.*

THUS she fell asleep in Jesus.

HER Consort, my much esteemed Friend and Brother, has a very tender Sense of this great Affliction. May the God of all Comfort support him under it, and abundantly supply the Absence of so desirable an earthly Blessing, by the Consolations of his own gracious Presence.

PERMIT me now to speak a few Words on this mournful Occasion to you, my younger Friends, the Children of the Deceased. I, with many others, sympathise in
your

your Affliction ; you may and should lay it to heart ; the Loss of such a Relative is a very affecting Dispensation of Providence, but your great Duty is to make a wise and religious Improvement of the awful Event. O, remember the Piety, Counsels and Example of your dear Mother, now in Glory : And instead of indulging immoderate Sorrow for one who is gone to a World from which she would not return for a thousand of ours, consider your own Mortality, and prepare to follow her. Be ye also ready, be mindful of your Duty to God ; above all Things, endeavour to secure an Interest in his Favour through Christ, who is an almighty, most gracious and everlasting Father to them that love and serve him. And next to this great Concern, be careful to perform all filial Regards to your surviving Parent : Bless God, that though he has seen fit to take from you a Mother so deserving of your Love and Duty, he has been pleased to spare the valuable Life of your Father, who is most capable and willing to assist you by his Counsels, Instructions, Prayers, and all the Offices of parental Kindness. I need not tell you, that your Piety, Obedience, and Affection will be a great Addition to the Pleasure of his Life ; you are very sensible of this. I pray God to bless and guide you by his Grace, that you may in all respects live as become the Descendants of religious Parents,
 worthy

worthy of her that is gone to Heaven, and of him who survives with you.

To conclude,

4. LET us all improve the comfortable Experiences of dying Saints, as a Confirmation of our Faith, and a Motive to quicken our Endeavours in the Practice of true Religion.

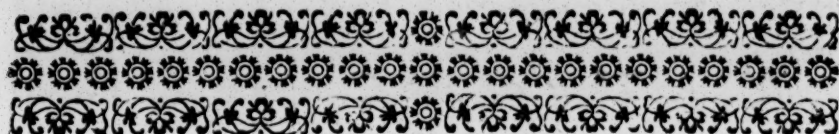
THE Wicked is driven away in his Wickedness, but the Righteous hath hope in his Death. *Mark the perfect Man, and behold the Upright, for the End of that Man is Peace.* Indeed some bad Men may seem to have Peace, and some good Men may be disconsolate and fearful in their last Moments; I shall not stay to enquire into the Reasons of these particular Cases, but innumerable Instances concur to prove the Truth of the forementioned general Observations. When Men are most serious, and impartial in their Reflexions, when deceitful Vizors are taken off, and Things are seen in their Reality, when Men stand between the two Worlds, just ready to leave the one, and enter into the other, we find they generally declare for Religion, and remonstrate against Wickedness and all Iniquity; we find that an evil Conscience is an insuperable Burden in a dying Hour, we hear Sinners passionately lamenting the Vices of an ill-spent Life, expressing their Fears of Eternity, and wishing to die the Death of the Righteous, and that their
latter

latter End might be like his : On the other hand, good Men generally have Comfort and Hope in their last Hours, and if Conscience gives them a clear Testimony of their Uprightness, they are willing to die, and many times rejoice that they are going out of our World of Sin and Sorrow, into the expected Region of Light, Love and Fidelity. Thousands have bitterly bewail'd the Vices of an evil Life, but who ever repented of his past Piety and Righteousness upon a Death-bed ?

THIS is a sensible Evidence of the Truth of Religion in general : And, blessed be God, the Christian Religion can shew numerous Attestations of this kind. The Spirit and Principles of the Gospel have supported many a departing Soul, and enable the Christian to glorify his Saviour by Death, as well as in his Life.

God grant, that we may live to the Lord, and die to the Lord, and that we may be for ever happy in his glorious Presence and Kingdom. Finally, Brethren, be ye stedfast and immoveable, always abounding in the Work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your Labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.

F I N I S.



Lately Published,

*Printed for JOSEPH DAVIDSON, at the
Golden-Lion in the Poultry.*

I. **T**HE Apostolical Rule concerning
the Ordination of Ministers consider'd, and recommended both to Ministers and People;

From 1 TIM. v. 22.

*Lay Hands suddenly on no Man, neither be
partaker of other Mens Sins. Keep thyself
pure.*

II. The Sovereignty and Wisdom of God display'd in the Afflictions of Men, together with a Christian Deportment under them. Being the Substance of several Sermons on *Eccles. vii. 13.* and *1 Pet. v. 19.* To which are added, Some Sermons on the Nature of Church-Communion, from *1 Cor. x. 17.* By the late Reverend Mr. *Thomas Boston.*

III. A

Book Printed for J. DAVIDSON.

III. A View of the Covenant of Grace from the sacred Records: Wherein the Parties in that Covenant, the Making of it, its Parts *Conditionary* and *Promissary*, and the Administration thereof, are distinctly considered: Together with the Trial of a saving Personal Inbeing in it, and the Way of Enstating Sinners therein unto their Eternal Salvation. To which is subjoined, A Memorial concerning *Personal* and *Family Fasting* and *Humiliation*, presented to Saints and Sinners. By the same AUTHOR.

IV. Human Nature in its four-fold State of Primitive Integrity, Entire Depravation, Begun Recovery, and Consummate Happiness or Misery, subsisting in the Parents of Mankind in Paradise, the Irregenerate, the Regenerate, all Mankind in the future State. In several practical Discourses. By the same AUTHOR. The third Edition, carefully compared with the *Second*, which was corrected and revised by the AUTHOR.



